

Early Learning and School Readiness Commission
Work Session Notes – October 21, 2004

Key Issue: Ensure that parents acquire the knowledge, skills and resources needed to be successful as their child's first teacher.

Recommendations:

- Establish statewide literacy coalition involving existing successful programs.
- Host Governor's Summit on the importance of reading.
- Establish media campaign to support family literacy (identify community partners) to spearhead state/local literacy campaigns.
- State Board of Education develops a "life skills" course required for high school graduation.
- Create a link from the Indiana government website to resources/websites for literacy with young children.

Work Group Discussion Points:

- Improving reading of parents/importance of reading
- Continue and support current literacy programs
- Governor's summit on the importance of reading (bringing all literacy groups together) into statewide coalition
- DOE spearhead campaign to be done in phases with Dept. of FSSA
- PR campaign targeted groups i.e. legislators, Colts, bring a book to be donated with media
- Storytelling/reading programs/PSA's on TV in celebrity readers i.e. Colts, Pacers, Governor
- Build on success of already existing programs
- Develop legislation that mandates a life skills course to be a required class prior to graduation with key components including but not limited to:
 - Importance of reading
 - How to write a check
 - The importance of reading to children
 - How reading to a child establishes a connection can lessen child abuse
- Establish a web site of available literacy/reading resources
- New cable companies, prior to opening business in Indiana, must have free GED/literacy classes

Recent comments received:

The intention was not to develop a course in life skills for students but to encourage districts/schools to develop a "some" seminars on parenting. Perhaps these could be done during homeroom periods, or IRP...study halls...giving students the opportunity to hear about being parents. The topics could be the importance of taking care of oneself while pregnant, the importance of taking care of the baby (physically) after birth and the importance of taking care of the child emotionally. This could just be guest speakers perhaps...or teachers that teach the life skills/cooking/parenting classes that some already take. The DOE would be responsible for

outlining what we want to present and maybe a little booklet on parenting (you hear people say that all the time...no one ever gave me a book on what to do)...so let's give them a book. Seminars, not a class.

Key Issue: Improve quality and coordination of early education and school readiness services including childcare, preschool and family support services and programs.

Recommendations:

- Create a tax stream that funds ECE just like is currently done with K-12.
- Regulate preschools, centers, home, ministries.
- Encourage school corporations to be supportive of early/preschool education programs.
- Network with other services (early education).
- Create an office of early childhood education at the state level (like Ohio and Illinois).
- Increase required credentials for early childhood education staff.
- Increase salaries and benefits for early childhood education staff.
- Implement a professional career ladder for early childhood education.
- Provide forgiveness for student loans for early childhood staff.
- Increase resource support for teachers (training, professional development, supplies/materials).
- Educate teachers about developmentally challenged children and behavior disorders.
- Improve and increase professional development.

Work Group Discussion Points:

- Provide high quality preschool
 - Create a tax stream that funds ECE just like is currently done with K-12
 - Regulate preschools, centers, home, ministries
 - Encourage school corporations to be supportive of early/preschool education programs
 - Network with other services (early education)
 - Create an office of early childhood education at the state level (like Ohio and Illinois)
- High quality staff
 - Increase required credentials for early childhood education staff
 - Increase salaries and benefits for early childhood education staff
 - Implement a professional career ladder for early childhood education
 - Provide forgiveness for student loans for early childhood staff
 - Increase resource support for teachers (training, professional development, supplies/materials)
 - Educate teachers about developmentally challenged children and behavior disorders
 - Improve and increase professional development

Recent comments received:

The business membership will not support a funding stream for early childhood programs from the state, or agree to regulate the current providers. The business membership would also have a problem with an office created for Early Childhood Education.

According to the instructions, our recommendations were to be made in reference to six domains, among them are marketability and fundability. I believe that these play on each other. So when I read of “creating a tax stream” I become concerned for the marketability of any program if that tax stream means the creation of more taxes to be collected in our tight economy or diverts monies from much enjoyed programs, If either of these is the case then marketability may be hampered. As you are aware we will need to be very creative as we finance and market this.

Key Issue: Support full-day kindergarten for all children.

Recommendations:

- Evaluate current programs (line items in state budget) and prioritize budget line items.
- Convincing taxpayers of the need and urgency for full-day kindergarten based on credible research.
- Change kindergarten entrance date to September 1st.
- Implement high-quality full-day kindergarten characterized by:
 - Curriculum aligned to standards that is developmentally appropriate,
 - Comprehensive staff development,
 - Parent involvement component,
 - Transition plans (pre- and post-).

Work Group Discussion Points:

- Appropriate resources in place before implementation
- Staff development is how to implement standards in a developmentally appropriate way
- Start with research that is bipartisan and unbiased that create results. Use the results for marketing campaign to public, which will create reprioritization of state funds and will give the state full day kindergarten
- Before we make kindergarten mandatory, we must first have full day kindergarten implemented
- To ensure that all children have as much access to a high quality kindergarten program stipulated by our current state standards, the entry date must be September 1st, and children must have access to a full day kindergarten program

Recent comments received:

I think the general public does not understand the strong resistance that teachers have to changing the entrance date to September 1st and why they feel that way...

In order to counteract the strong resistance by some educators of changing the entrance age (assumption that older is better and the children will be able to meet the academic standards better) extensive staff development of teachers needs to take place informing them that the

Indiana Academic Standards can be met but must be implemented in developmentally appropriate ways.

It seems to me that an assumption is being made that all members of the Governor's Commission on Early Childhood Education are in total agreement that full-day kindergarten should be the only option offered as evidenced in "key issue: Full-day kindergarten for all children." I would like to clarify that I do believe that full-day kindergarten should be made available as an option to all students but I also believe that full-day kindergarten should be left as an option and not made a requirement. I do not doubt that many parents would welcome the opportunity to have their five to six year old child in school for a full day, but I also believe that if full-day kindergarten is the only option made available, some parents will seek other alternatives for their young children.

Key Issue: Make sure every child has access to high quality programs that help prepare them for school.

Recommendations:

- Educate the public on the importance of early learning and school readiness through a statewide collaboration of organizations focusing on young children and a comprehensive media campaign.
- Provide access in every community by building on public/private (schools, childcare providers), building on what exists (Head Start, schools, child care sites), and defining "at-risk" rated to access.

Work Group Discussion Points:

- Statewide campaign by a collaborative of organizations focusing on young children (e.g. AARP, parents, pediatricians, unions, employers, teachers)
- Through a comprehensive media campaign – radio, TV, billboards, newspaper stories and ads, brochures, PSAs, speakers bureau, website
- Simple message regarding young children/brain research
- Audiences (for campaign) – population without children – grandparents, elderly, work parents, etc.
 - Expanded markets and methods
 - Groceries, bathrooms, cable TV, website
 - Employers – banks, benefit providers, AARP
 - Entertainers in/from Indiana (radio, etc.)
 - Sport team sponsorship – foundations
 - Fast foods – McDonalds, etc.
- Targeted approach – business, engaged public, parents engaged
- Defining at-risk related to access
 - Working poor – 185%
 - Children at-risk of disabilities